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# Let Me Tell You a Story: The Power of Organizational Storytelling in Libraries

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# Let Me Tell You a Story – The power of organizational storytelling in libraries

Jennifer Bartlett, University of Kentucky Libraries  
KPLA/KLTRT 2012 Spring Conference

# Organizational Storytelling

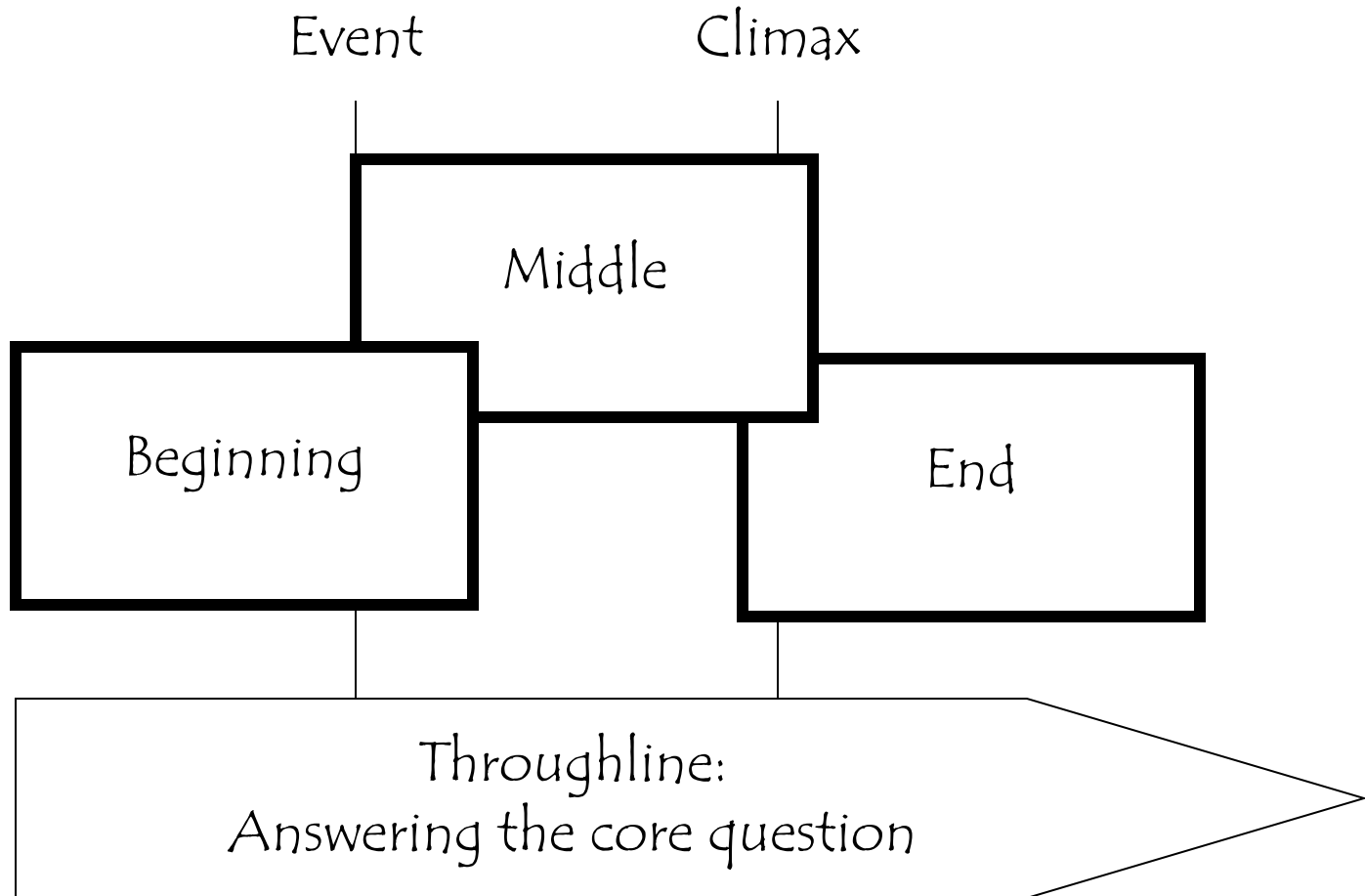
- ▶ Elements of good stories
- ▶ Why we should use storytelling in our organizations
- ▶ The six stories you need to know how to tell
- ▶ Storytelling techniques and examples

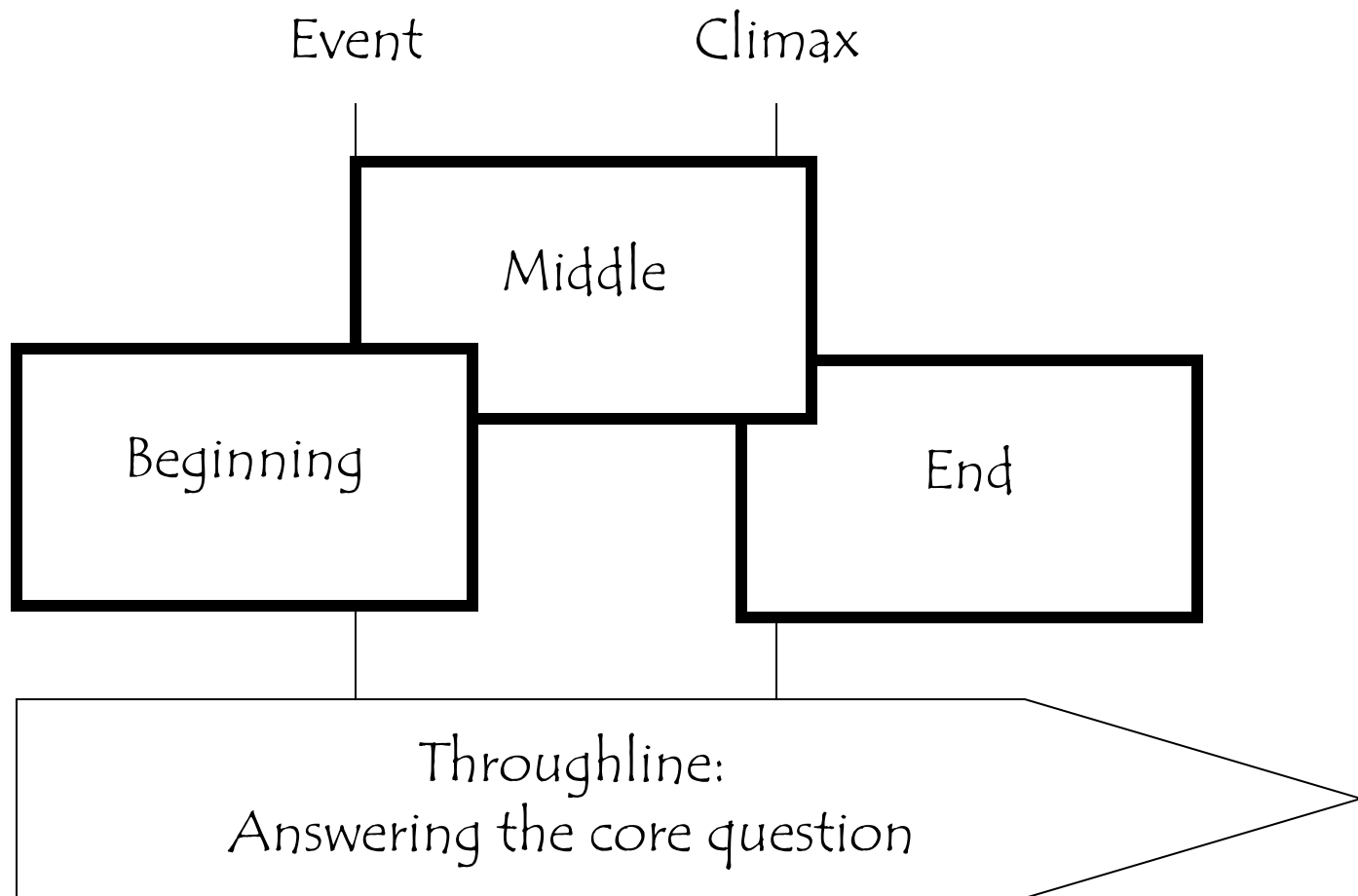


## What makes for a good story? >>

*The Boyhood of Raleigh* by Sir John Everett Millais, oil on canvas, 1870

# What makes a good story?





# Organizational Storytelling

Knowing the right story to tell

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Telling the story effectively

To:

- ▶ Influence decision making
  - ▶ Navigate change
- ▶ Interpret the past and shape the future
  - ▶ Communicate values

# To Communicate Values

- ▶ Who are we as an organization?
- ▶ What do we stand for?
- ▶ Who knows about it?

Expressed values and “values-in-action”  
need to be the same.



# Expressed Values Example

## COLLEGIALITY

- We value cooperation and collaboration.
- We commit to creating an environment that encourages collegiality.

## CREATIVITY

- We value innovative ideas and flexible solutions.
- We commit to providing resources for life-long learning.

## INTEGRITY

- We value open and honest communication.
- We commit to the highest standards of personal and professional integrity.
- We value the trust placed in us by our colleagues and users.

## SERVICE

- We value those we serve.
- We commit to quality services that meet or exceed our users' expectations.
- We serve library employees as well as our users.

## RESPECT

- We value the importance of every individual.
- We commit to an open, accepting, and diverse environment.
- We treat users and employees with kindness, consideration and compassion.

*UK Libraries Mission Statement, <http://libraries.uky.edu>*

# Your Values Narrative

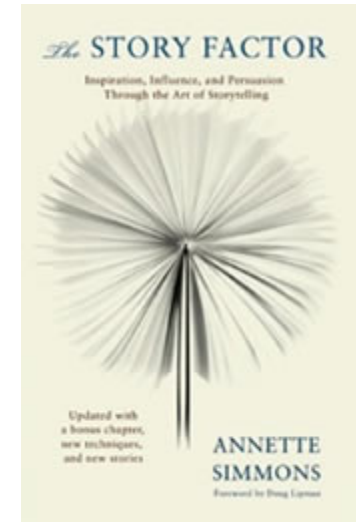
- ▶ What are 5–10 pivotal events in your library's history?
- ▶ Who are your library's heroes?
- ▶ What key values or characteristics of your library are highlighted in your stories?
- ▶ Are there any physical objects or artifacts important to your narrative?
- ▶ What crisis events or stories are important?

# Other “trigger” questions

- ▶ What was one of your happiest days at work? Your unhappiest?
- ▶ What makes you feel proud and/or fulfilled to work in a library?
- ▶ Have you ever had to resolve a conflict between two values? How did you do that?

# Six Stories You Need to Know

1. Who I Am stories
2. Why I Am Here stories
3. The Vision stories
4. Teaching stories
5. Values-in-action stories
6. I Know What You Are Thinking stories



From Annette Simmons, *The Story Factor*

# What story do you want to tell?

1. Who I Am
2. Why I Am Here
3. The Vision
4. Teaching
5. Values-in-action
6. I Know What You Are Thinking

# Techniques and Tips

- ▶ 1. Believe in the story – tell stories that you like.
  - ▶ 2. Take the time to prepare.
  - ▶ 3. Make the story as long as necessary, but not too long – don't hesitate to remove the slow parts.
  - ▶ 4. Use good pacing – allow the audience time to absorb the story.
  - ▶ 5. Make eye contact with your listeners.
  - ▶ 6. Avoid "moral of the story" finishes.
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- ▶ Also see “Storytelling Tips” from Sean Buvala at <http://storytellingtips.info>.

# For Further Reading

- ▶ Denning, Stephen. *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2001)
- ▶ Marek, Kate. *Organizational Storytelling for Librarians: Using Stories for Effective Leadership* (Chicago: ALA, 2011)
- ▶ Simmons, Annette. *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion through the Art of Storytelling* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2001)

# Interesting Websites

- ▶ Golden Fleece Group
- ▶ [www.storyatwork.com](http://www.storyatwork.com)
- ▶ Storytelling: Passport to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- ▶ [www.creatingthe21stcentury.org](http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org)
- ▶ The Moleskin: think, try, teach
- ▶ [www.themoleskin.com](http://www.themoleskin.com)



# Thank you!

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<http://www.slideshare.net/JenBartlett>